

Stay prepared despite less-active forecast

BY GLENN RICHARDS

The 2019 hurricane season will be slightly less active than normal.

This upcoming season is advertised to be 55 percent of normal activity with 13 named storms, five becoming hurricanes while two will be intense hurricanes of Category 3 strength or greater.

It appears that the El Nino pattern will persist through the summer season and could possibly strengthen in August through September as we enter the period of maximum water temperatures.

The El Nino will hamper storm development across the tropical Atlantic due to increased vertical wind shear.

Water temperatures across the entire Atlantic basin are running slightly cooler than normal. The slightly cooler waters will decrease the intensity of developing tropical systems in addition to killing off tropical waves prior to their development.

I anticipate that many "wanna-be" systems will have a healthy outflow and upper level environment, but may not be able to overcome the lack of thermal energy or the hostile wind shear above. The few tropical waves that do manage to become a tropical storm or



Richards

hurricane will find that the cooler waters will limit their growth and the wind shear will shorten their overall duration.

Always remember that what really matters is where the tropical storms and hurricanes make landfall.

Currently there is a 48 percent (average last century is 52 percent) chance across the entire U.S. coastline of a major hurricane making landfall. Even if we have 20 hurricanes form, and none strike land, then the season ends up "feeling" very quiet.

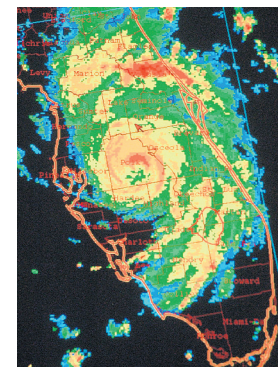
Currently our steering currents appear to be setting up a scenario where lower pressures will occur across the central and western Atlantic. These lower pressures will aid in turning any Atlantic system prematurely to the north and keep Florida in the clear.

These lower pressures also will aid in producing more wind shear across the Gulf of Mexico. This hostile shear environment would rip apart tropical systems as they move north towards the U.S.

Make sure we stay prepared for the potential of at least one tropical system striking this season. It only takes one system to make for a bad year.

Glenn Richards is chief meteorologist for Fox 35.

Inside



15 years ago: Charley, Frances, Ivan, Jeanne walloped Florida

Central Floridians will never forget the 2004 hurricane season, when Charley's path took an unexpected turn and drove through the I-4 corridor (left) on Friday, Aug. 13. The storm was the first of four hurricanes in a six-week span that left the Sunshine State reeling. **Photos, 8-9**

Cover story: Forecasters and the public can learn from powerful hurricanes Michael, Irma and Matthew, **4**

Necessities: What to bring to shelter; first-aid checklist, **10**

Helping kids: How to keep children busy and ease fears, **12**

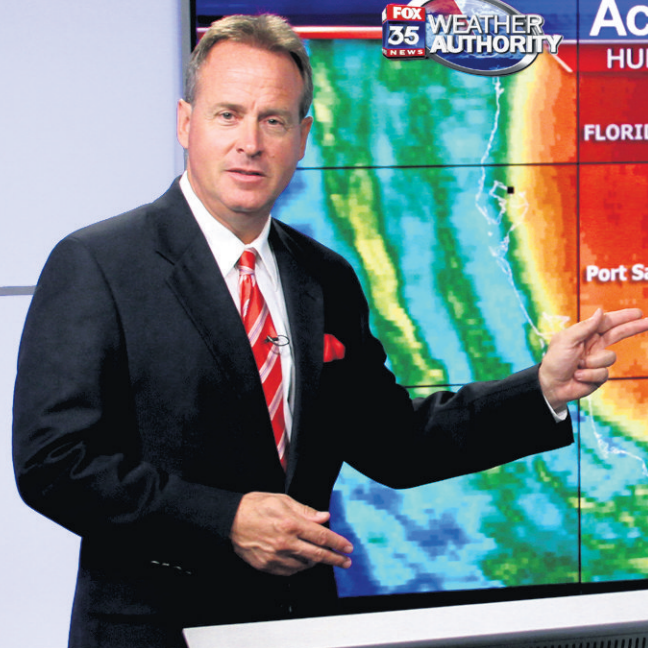
Food-prep plan: Get started with these suggestions, **12**

Storm names: How and why the practice began, **13**

Tracking map: Monitor storms' progress all season, **14**

On the cover: An aerial view of Mexico Beach shows Category 5 Michael's widespread destruction last October. Photo by Joe Raedle, Getty Images

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